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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/R/MR:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, AZAIBACK, AND
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA MDAVIDSON
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
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TAGS: [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: Syria/Greece, Syria/Italy, Syria/Netherlands,
Syria/France, Terje Roed-Larsen, Lebanon, Palestinian Territories,
Iraq (6/13)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers on June 13 reported the visit to Damascus by Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs Dora Bakoyannis and her meeting with President Asad on June 12 about bilateral relations and political developments in Iraq, the occupied territories and Lebanon. Bakoyannis praised Syria's pivotal role in the region and its hosting of refugees. Both sides stressed the importance of intensifying efforts and increasing cooperation between regional countries and the European Union in order to find just solutions to regional issues that preserve rights and restore the occupied lands. FM Bakoyannis also held meetings with VP Shara and FM Mouallem.

Papers also reported President Asad's meeting on June 12 with Oliviero Diliberto, Secretary General of the Italian Communist Party, focusing on means of enhancing relations between the Italian Communist Party and the Baath Party, as well as between the two countries. They also discussed current regional developments.

Papers also featured a speech given at al-Ahram Center for Strategic and Political Studies in Cairo on June 12 by Dutch FM Maxime Verhagen, reiterating the importance of cementing comprehensive peace in the Middle East and pointing out Syria's vital role in bringing about peace. Verhagen stressed the importance of finding a solution on the Palestinian-Israeli front and prioritizing that solution on all levels. Verhagen pointed out the repercussions of leaving the Palestinian cause unresolved, calling upon the international community to guarantee security and development in the region if a peace agreement is reached on the Palestinian front. He also said that the recently activated Arab Initiative is a historical step on the path of overcoming the current obstacles to negotiations. Verhagen stressed the importance of providing the necessary international assistance to the Palestinians, stating that his country is prepared to provide aid either on the bilateral level or via the European Union.

Independent al-Watan quoted a French diplomat in Damascus as saying that French President Nicola Sarkozy will dispatch former Chief of French Intelligence, Jean Claude Cosron, to Syria to hold talks with Syrian officials on Syrian-French relations. The source said that this step means that France has started to retrieve its "special position" in the Middle East after a period that was influenced by personal interests rather than political status.

The diplomat said that this step comes on the heels of consultations with the French Ambassador in Damascus that aimed to find a starting point for a new dialogue between the two countries. However, the source said, it is unlikely that relations between the two countries will witness immediate improvement.

All papers cited the following Foreign Ministry statement on June 12: "In response to what has been mentioned in the report of Terje Roed-Larsen submitted to the UN Security Council about the implementation of Resolution 1559, Syria once again stresses that it has implemented what is related to it in said resolution." "Larsen's allegations before the UN Security Council on smuggling weapons from Syria to Lebanon are full adoption of what Israel circulates, aiming at harming Syrian-Lebanese relations," the official source added. "At the same time, Syria condemns the misleading reports Larsen customarily circulates in order to target Syria and its stances each time Security Council discusses Resolution 1559," it noted. "As a result of those lies, Syria long ago broke ties with Larsen, because he doesn't serve the UN agenda, but the agenda of known international sides," it said. The source further said, "The Security Council referred in its statement to claims of transferring weapons from Syria to Lebanon, according to Israeli reports, and this underlines the non-credibility of the information, because Israel is the side which violates Lebanon's sovereignty, unity and independence and still occupies Lebanese territories." The source said that Syria has asked the UN Secretary General to provide it with any information regarding this issue, for Syria to scrutinize them and give answers, but the UN has so far failed to do so. "Larsen used to ignore the unveiled interference of some known parties in Lebanon's internal affairs, preventing the Lebanese from reaching a national reconciliation," the source said. It added, "Syria repeats its rejection of the allegations of transferring weapons to Lebanon through Syria, considering them rumors launched for political purposes. Syria also denies any

relation to the so-called 'Fatah al-Islam' and confirms commitment to Lebanon's territorial integrity, independence and stability as well as reaching national accord and working to form a national unity government."

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad receives Greek Foreign Minister Bakoyannis and an Italian Communist Party delegation. Bakoyannis: Talks were very important.... We support lifting the siege on Palestinians and supporting the political process in Iraq. Diliberto: Syria has the right to restoration of the Golan" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 6/13)

"The Netherlands Foreign Minister: Syria has a vital role" (Government-owned Tishreen, 6/13)

"French sources: Jean Claude Cosron has the authority to visit Syria" (Independent al-Watan, 6/13)

"Foreign Ministry Source: Larsen's accusations are based on Israeli rumors and aim at sabotaging Syrian-Lebanese relations" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 6/13)

"Israeli shells hit Palestinian President Abbas' headquarters and PM Hanieh's residence. Scores of Palestinians killed and injured. Fateh considers withdrawal from the government" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 6/13)

"While Israeli guns rest, Palestinian civil strife reaps 25 Palestinian victims. Fear spreads in the Gaza Strip" (Government-owned Tishreen, 6/13)

"While the Lebanese army seizes new Fatah al-Islam positions and enhances its progress in Nahr al-Bared, Lahoud: Unity among Lebanese is capable of confronting schemes of partition, expulsion and fragmentation" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 6/13)

"Washington calls on the UN to expand its role in Iraq. Admiral William Fallon, top US commander in the Middle East, warns al-Maliki to counter the growing tide of congressional anger and opposition to

the war, giving him one month to achieve tangible political progress" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 6/13)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Bitter Experience"

Ali Qasim, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (6/13): "Many observers contemplate the fabricated Israeli exaggeration in the talk about peace at a time when Israel is not eliminating the possibility of aggression or denying its premeditated hostile intentions through large-scale preparations, including war games with the participation of American pilots.

"Israeli PM Olmert wants to send a message to the Israeli people, who are now more convinced of the state of impotence that their leaders are experiencing on the political and military levels.... Israelis realize that this level of political leaders cannot take effective steps toward peace, and that all it can do is embroil Israel in new adventures, the results of which no one can predict."

"What worries Israelis most is their knowledge that their decisions are no longer made in the Israeli kitchen, as they used to think, especially under this government, which is unable to make any decision in isolation from Americans. Therefore, their real fear stems from their firm belief that the handover of their decisions to the US Administration amid sweeping changes and solid failures of the American plans, dictates that Israel be assigned missions that

do not necessary serve Israeli interests...."

"They Do Not Seek Peace"

Dr. Sa'id Musallam, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (6/13): "The Israeli talk about readiness to pay the price of peace coincides with Israeli-American military exercises and possible scenarios for new aggression....

"Israel is not seriously searching for ways to resume negotiations with Syria from where they left off.... A sincere quest for peace does not need secret channels and media leaks.... The Israeli leadership is exploiting the internal and external situations politically in order to make it through the bottleneck now that the noose has been tightened on its military and political leaders....

"The search for genuine peace does not require military exercises and preparation for aggression....

"Peace and the search for real opportunities for its success require courage, recognition of other peoples' rights, and commitment to international legitimacy. These things do not exist in Israel's military dictionary and historical conduct...."

"Lost Credibility"

Umar Jaftali, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (6/13): "There are flagrant contradictions in the position of the US Administration toward the issue of human rights in the region....

For example, President Bush called on Libya to release the Bulgarian nurses but failed to call on Israel to release 40 Palestinian officials, including ministers and the speaker of the Legislative Council....

"While Bush also called on Sudan to accept the deployment of international forces in Darfur, he prevented the deployment of such forces to protect the Palestinian people, who are besieged in their homeland, suffering the worst racial persecution....

"President Bush is also used to leveling accusations against Syria whenever he faces hardship in Iraq and whenever his troops there suffer more losses and bad reports. He even expressed indignation over vague Israeli talk about peace and viewed it as departure from his positions toward Syria. Nor do we forget how he prevented Israel from stopping its criminal aggression on Lebanon in July....

"For all these reasons, peoples of the region, as well as European peoples, see nothing in the American policy but futile adherence to a strategy of hegemony that lacks the logic of justice and law....

"As for Syria, its fears that the Bush administration has abandoned the role of a fair sponsor of the peace process in the region remain valid. Had the American position been different, this administration would have accepted the extended Syrian hand to solve all the problems of the region, and it would have dealt with the Baker-Hamilton recommendations and with the advice of other important American figures that visited Syria and stressed that the American position toward it is wrong."

"Advocates of Terrorism"

Ghazi al-Dada, a commentator in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (6/13): "The American role in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is extremely negative.... Not only does the United States refrain from applying any pressure on Israel to stop its aggression against Palestinians, it also effectively joins Israel in stifling and starving out Palestinians through the unjust siege imposed on them.... The United States also fuels domestic Palestinian differences....

"The European position, likewise, is not positive, even if it is not negative.... In light of this, Palestinians have no choice but to stay united and rise above their differences, which serve Israel only.... Palestinians also need to adhere strongly to their full rights and not give the Israeli-American plan targeting their rights any chance to succeed...."

Roebuck